The Great Slap Flap

The *Village Voice* called it "one of the most terrifying news stories about President Nixon to date." As aptly as any, that hyperbole summed up the hypertense relations that now exist between a suspicious press and a defensive President. Some White House reporters thought that there was too little substance in the "terrifying" story —Nixon's "slapping" of a citizen at McCoy Air Force Base near Orlando, Fla. —to merit any attention at all. Yet publication of accounts by some papers, plus an angry White House counterblast that forced still more coverage, blew the incident into one of the strangest press stories of a strange year.

It began when the President decided to greet well-wishers after his televised news conference at Disney World. Watched by two pool reporters—William J. Eaton of the Chicago *Daily News* and Matthew Cooney of Westinghouse Broadcasting Co.—Nixon came to a man and a young boy in the airport crowd. As Eaton and Cooney later told it, Nixon asked the man whether he was the boy's "mother or grandmother." Apparently puzzled, the man replied, "Neither." Peering for a closer look, the President replied, "Of course not," and gave what Eaton and Cooney described as "a light slap" to the man's face.

AP

MASTER SERGEANT KLEIZO & NIXON
Mother? Grandmother?

Neither reporter felt at the time that the incident deserved mention in the summary of presidential activities that they, as pool reporters, were to prepare for the larger White House press corps. Eaton, however, mentioned the "slap" to *Wall Street Journal* Reporter Fred L. Zimmerman and demonstrated it as a stinging blow to the cheek. Zimmerman later checked details with Cooney. As rumors of the incident spread Cooney and Eaton were persuaded by colleagues the next day to write up a supplemental account. They prefaced it with the disclaimer that they still thought the event "insignificant." But recalling Eaton's demonstration, Zimmerman filed a story to the *Journal* for the issue of Monday, Nov. 19, saying that Nixon had "soundly slapped" the man's face. In a story for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, James Deakin quoted from the pool account but added a detail that he had personally learned from Cooney and Eaton: "Reporters heard the man say it was a hard slap."

The Deakin and Zimmerman articles drew furious denials from Deputy Press Secretary Gerald Warren, who called their pieces examples of "irresponsible and twisted accounts which have been circulated in recent months." The White House perhaps had grounds to complain, but its attempt to use the story as a means to discredit general press criticism seemed heavy-handed to most newsmen.

The man involved in the incident was finally located: Air Force Master Sergeant Edward Kleizo, 50, who, immediately after the event, had told Eaton "the President slapped me." But he gave CBS a slightly different version two days afterward. What Nixon had actually asked, Kleizo recalled, was "something like, 'Are you the boy's grandmother or grandfather?' "—a more understandable slip of the tongue than the total confusion of gender reported originally. "Then," Kleizo continued, "he looked back and tapped me affectionately on the cheek, sort of like putting shaving lotion on."

Had some reporters ballooned a friendly gesture into a minor tempest? Deakin's boss, *Post-Dispatch* Washington Bureau Chief Richard Dudman, denied it: "That was uncommon behavior on the part of the President, and it therefore should be reported." But since the original eyewitness reporting had been uncommonly ambivalent, some doubt remained as to just what had happened.

Policing Chicago Cops

When a grand jury indicted three Chicago policemen last week for assaults on civilians, not a peep of protest emerged from the Chicago *Tribune*, a longtime champion of the city's 13,000 men in blue. Reason: the *Trib's* own reporting had prompted the indictments, as well as continuing investigations of five other patrolmen. Five months of relentless digging had produced an eight-part series that is probably the most thorough examination of police brutality ever published in a U.S. newspaper.

A teen-ager lost his left eye after being slugged by a policeman on the prowl for a much older suspect. An upper-middle-class housewife, wearing only a nightgown and housecoat, was dragged from her home, thrown down a flight of concrete stairs, handcuffed and belabored with obscenities by a police sergeant who claimed that she had urged her dog to attack him. During a family sidewalk fracas, a pregnant woman was pounded about the abdomen by a patrolman; although the woman has four other normal children, the infant born after that beating has a drooping eyelid, a bone protruding from his chest and a congenital heart defect.

LEE BALTERMAN

EDITOR JONES (SEATED) & *TRIB* TEAM*
Extraordinary precautions.

Fearful Victims. The exposé was proposed by Investigative Reporter George Bliss, 55, whose muckraking team won a Pulitzer Prize last year for a series on voting fraud. Like many other Chicago newsmen, he had been hearing of police brutality for years. Last spring, Bliss became convinced that many accusations coming from blacks were true. He also suspected that police violence was not limited to the ghetto. *Tribune* City Editor Bill Jones agreed that the subject deserved full investigation and assigned Bliss three young reporters: Pamela Zekman, 29, a former social worker with four years experience on the *Trib;* William Mullen, 29, a rewrite man for most of his six years at the *Trib;* and Emmett George, 25, a black reporter who had joined the paper only a few weeks earlier after stints with U.P.I. and *Jet* magazine.

The team set to work in late June and was immediately denied access to the files of the police department's internal affairs division, the office responsible for investigating brutality complaints. Eventually, however, a few policemen did cooperate. From these and other sources the Bliss team obtained hundreds of names of people involved in brutality cases. All told, the reporters investigated more than 500

*Standing left to right: George, Bliss, Mullen, Zekman.

cases, of which 37 were selected to appear in the stories.

The team found that many victims and witnesses were reluctant to talk. Says Zekman: "People were afraid of the police department. We had to convince them that we were sincerely trying to pursue a social evil." Whenever this reticence was broken down, the team took extraordinary precautions to document material. To reduce the chances of reporting errors, key interviews were conducted by two newsmen. Injured victims were asked to provide medical records and given lie-detector tests. People with police records were dropped, as were witnesses whose accounts proved to contain even the smallest inaccuracies.

The reporters found their five-month task physically and emotionally exhausting. Emmett George was shocked to discover that race was relatively unimportant in police brutality: "I found that there are a lot of black officers involved. Some of the most sadistic people were black, and those people need to go off the force first." Zekman was so moved by the case of the deformed boy whose mother had been beaten during pregnancy that she has arranged corrective surgery. The team rarely took a weekend off and usually worked double shifts. Jones last week was sending the four on vacations, hoping that their effort to police cops will now make the grand jury work overtime.

Hugh and Marlene and Bob and Helga

"There is no Helga but Helga," pants the copy accompanying a nude layout in the December *Penthouse*, "and Helga is her name." While there is demonstrably a girl in the *Penthouse* pictures, there is no Helga, and Helga is not her name. She is Model Marlene Appelt, and when she learned in Munich last week that she was on display in *Penthouse*, she was fit to be clothed. She remembers posing for German Photographer Michael Holtz last spring. But, she claims, "I was paid a piddling fee, and I was never informed that I was to be sold to *Penthouse*. If Michael had told me, I would never have given permission, since I consider *Penthouse* a pornographic magazine."

Which is odd, because Marlene has already received extensive U.S. uncoverage in Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* and *Oui*, archrivals of Publisher Bob Guccione's *Penthouse*. She was featured as one of *Playboy's* "Girls of Munich" in August 1972, an exposure that won her a spot on *Oui's* November 1972 cover and a centerfold spread inside ("Marlene: The Blonde Angel"). Which is again odd, because Guccione refuses to photograph models for *Penthouse* who have appeared nude elsewhere. He also insists that his models give their real names for publication. Does he feel he was snookered into running pictures of a *Playboy* and *Oui* veteran, and a falsely named one at that? Says the gallant Guccione: "She belongs to the world."

And what of *Penthouse* readers? Should they feel snookered by the overheated description of a totally fictitious "Helga Schiller"—ostensibly born in Bremen, raised by an accountant and his actress wife, a "homeless woman at home in supertechnology's global village" who, at 21, is toying with the idea of a sadomasochistic relationship? Marlene, 26, is actually a sometime Munich actress and the girl friend of one of Germany's most successful record producers, Monty Lüfther. On the other hand, have any *Penthouse* fans actually read the "Helga" copy?

OUI COVER GIRL MARLENE

PENTHOUSE UNCOVER GIRL HELGA

GOOD

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